



Friends of Red Kites

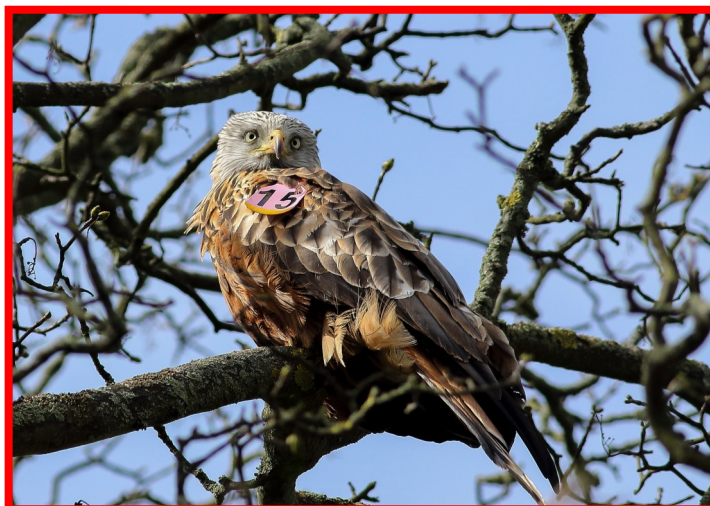
in the North East of England

www.friendsofredkites.org.uk



Newsletter, Summer 2017

Flirtations in the Sky, Part 1 - Margaret Webster



A red kite glided over the length of our conservatory. A flash of lime green on the right wing confirmed it had been fledged in 2006. The wing tag was hidden as it soared above the window. But could it have been..? I checked the Friends of Red Kites website (individual histories) where 'sightings' are recorded. I often follow the red kite stories.

Let me tell you about the mighty Red Philip (WT 15) and the tale of his first love Flag (WT 16) both released in 2004 [right wing tag coloured yellow]. Their initial home in 2006 was on the Gibside Estate. They successfully reared five chicks in the following three years. This was thought to be a long-term true romance in the skies above us. Their first chick, Geordie, flew the coop as it were and was never seen again. Their second 'family', RJ and Farra Flame, grew into typical teenagers. RJ was quite a cocky lad. He went a-wooing in his second year but the

trouble was the 'older' lady already had a mate! Parochial Poppy took his eye while she was out foraging for beetles in the stubble of an old cereal crop. Along came Sky Diver, her partner of two years. He chased RJ off, but the lad came back for more, only to be overwhelmed by a bird one year his senior. RJ may have gone to pastures new to try his luck. His sister, Farra Flame, caused her parents less of a headache. She captured the heart of my favourite named bird - Sky Dancer. He was a bachelor boy of 2006 whose favoured haunt was over the Derwent Reservoir where he met Farra Flame, out stretching her wings. They fledged a chick together in Blanchland giving Red Philip and Flag their first grandchild, Fire Star, in 2008. The following year Farra Flame was seen back in Gateshead, flying with another 2006 male, George. Had there been some marital strife? Hopefully Sky Dancer had not taken his last waltz.

Red Philip and Flag's next brood, also born in 2008, were Crimson Ray and Starburst. Crimson Ray, unlike his older brother, played it cool for a few years and seemed to finally settle down in 2016 with an unnamed 2014 lass from the Derwent Valley. [Her parents were Polo and Kitty who have been together since 2008]. Starburst has been more allusive and, as yet, has not found a mate. Tragedy befell Red Philip and Flag when their next chicks fell from the nest when flexing their young wings. One chick, tagged C6, was rescued and raised in the care of the Northern Kites Project until released in July 2009 but it was found dead in August; the weather had been poor and, without parental guidance, the young bird had no hunting skills to survive.

Did the loss of the chicks 'disturb' the relationship between Red Philip and Flag? In 2010, Flag rejected her partner of four years and teamed up with a younger male - Thunderbird. Well, the name suggests a lot. He was a Chilterns bird of 2005 whose first love had been the terrifically named Fantastic Flying Fiona. The pairing wasn't a success and they never produced any chicks. 'Fiona' has not been seen since 2010. This may have prompted Thunderbird to move on, but in doing so he split up the successful partnership of Red Philip and Flag. The new pairing proved as unsuccessful in the first two years as the one he had with Fiona, but in 2013 Flag fledged two chicks in her new home in a silver birch tree in the Derwent Walk Country Park. The following year, 2014, she and Thunderbird fledged one chick, tagged J1. Next to the chick were fresh carrion and some white clothes! Do Red Kites have baby-showers? Sadly, Flag suffered another loss when J1 was found dead in Edmundbyers. A post-mortem concluded that the young bird had been poisoned by Carbofuran [which had been banned since 2002]. Flag has had one more chick with Thunderbird, fledged in 2015. K5 had a good start in life as the remains of two grey squirrels were found in the nest. Her nest failed in 2016 and signs of disturbance at the base of the tree may have been the cause.

Stay tuned to find out what happens to Red Philip in the next Newsletter.....

Annual General Meeting - Harold Dobson

Your invitation to, and paperwork for, our eighth AGM is included in the mailing. The AGM is to be held on the evening of Wednesday 21st June at Lintzford Garden Centre. Hopefully, the meeting itself should last no more than 30-40 minutes and is followed by a meal: choice of main course followed by a choice of fresh cream cakes at the princely sum of £8.00!!

We are always on the lookout for new members to join our Management Committee which meets, usually, on the first Monday of the month.

Health Walks Update - Jackey Lockwood



The regular Monday afternoon Red Kite Health Walks have gone ahead at our usual walking locations along the course of the River Derwent and have been very well attended. The average number of walkers out each week is 44 so far this year (compared to 35 this time last year). In January, from the start point at Winlaton Mill, we walked through Derwenthaugh Park to the Nine Arches viaduct and beyond. February saw us walking from Stirling Lane to Lintzgreen and back then, in March, we used the Derwenthaugh Park and Derwent Walk. In April we returned to a newish walk starting from the Blaydon Leisure Centre and going around Shibdon Nature Reserve to the Lower Derwent. During May the walk was through Derwenthaugh out to Lockhaugh. It looked and sounded very different to how it was earlier in the year. Birds, flowers and trees were all very vibrant. Each location has given us a variety of wildlife to see and hear which has changed with the seasons.



Each year we do a few longer walks in a different location. Once again in May we did one of our favourite walks along Northumberland's outstanding coast from High Newton via Dunstanburgh to Craster and on to Cullernose Point. 33 walkers enjoyed fine, sunny weather, stunning scenery and a variety of birds and flowers. Our particular thanks go to Glenn for organising these walks.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our twelve trained Health Walk Leaders for their continued commitment and enthusiasm. Their knowledge of the wildlife and the area adds to the enjoyment of the walks. I would also like to thank the regular Health Walkers themselves who help make the walks a pleasure to organise and who do so much to support our activities. Thank you and enjoy the walking in the rest of 2017.

Events Report - Sylvia Jones

Members' Evening - April 24th 2017

The Red Kite pub is always one of our favourite venues for events. 46 FoRK members enjoyed a meal and a relaxed social evening. Unfortunately, we had to limit the numbers and five regular members applied too late. Ken Sanderson provided a detailed update on red kite monitoring and territories this year. We were well looked after by Louise and her team. Thank you to our many loyal supporters.



Gibside Family Fun Day - July 23rd 2017

The Friends of Red Kites have strong links with the National Trust at Gibside and the Go North East bus company. Once again you can look forward to a family fun day when we join forces to allow you to enjoy the fabulous grounds at Gibside. A Go North East red kite bus and driver will attract your attention and their team of entertainers will ensure everyone can enjoy the bubbleologist, face painters and various games. Friends of Red Kites will provide a tombola and up-to-date information about red kites in our area. Please put this date in your diary and join us for this fun event.



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